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Pour une poétique de l'exemplum courtois

The Falcon and the Glove or How the Courtly *Exemplum* Teaches Love in Andreas Capellanus' *Tractatus de amore*

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Abstract : Andreas Capellanus' Tractatus de amore *contains two courtly tales, ostensibly used to symbolically illustrate its lessons on love. In the first book, which catalogues the exchanges between would-be lovers of various social classes, a noble suitor tells the* Lai du Trot *to the noble lady he desires and successfully persuades her not to close her door to love. The other, inserted at the end of the second book, describes a Breton knight's quest, which is also successful, in search of the god of Love and the love of his lady. These stories, inserted on two levels of the text, one placed in the mouth of an interlocutor and the other told by the narrator, are courtly because they come from the Breton* lai *tradition, and they are told in, or take place around, the court ; in particular the idealized court of the god of Love. In this paper I would like to explore the role these two tales play in such a contradictory treatise. Can they be read as* exempla *and if so what kind of love do they seek to demonstrate ? I would like to show that the courtly* exemplum*, flexible in the hands of both reader and writer, is ideally suited to demonstrate the ambiguous truth of love. As the narrative version of Andreas'* duplex sententia*, these tales contribute to a didactic discourse which transmits courtliness alongside rhetoric, and rhetoric through the teachings of love.*

Résumé : Le Tractatus de amore *d'Andreas Capellanus contient deux contes courtois, ostensiblement utilisés pour illustrer des leçons d'amour. Dans le premier livre, qui catalogue les échanges entre des amants potentiels de différentes classes sociales, un noble prétendant raconte le* Lai du Trot *à une femme de son rang qu'il désire, et il réussit à la convaincre de ne pas fermer la porte à l'amour. Le deuxième, inséré à la fin du deuxième livre, décrit la quête d'un chevalier breton à la recherche du dieu d'Amour et de l'amour de sa dame, une quête qui est aussi une réussite. Ces histoires, à deux niveaux du texte, une dans la bouche d'un interlocuteur et l'autre racontée par le narrateur, sont courtoises parce qu'elles viennent de la matière de Bretagne et de la tradition du* lai *et elles se déroulent dans, et autour de, la cour, en particulier la cour idéalisée du dieu d'Amour. Dans cet article, j'aimerais explorer le rôle de ces deux récits dans un traité aussi contradictoire. Pouvons-nous les lire comme des* exempla *et, si oui, quelle sorte d'amour essaient-ils de démontrer ? J'aimerais montrer que l'*exemplum *courtois, manipulable par l'écrivain mais aussi par le lecteur, est particulièrement apte à dévoiler la vérité ambiguë de l'amour. Comme une version narrative de la* duplex sententia *d'Andreas, ces récits contribuent au discours didactique qui transmet la courtoisie en même temps que la rhétorique, et la rhétorique à travers des leçons d'amour.*

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Choosing to write an article on Andreas Capellanus' *Tractatus de amore* feels like opening up a can of worms[1]. Andreas' work, at the center of the now old debate about courtly love, raises issues about courtly literature in general, and questions the very presumptions which are at the heart of how we view and define it. The *De amore*, a *pro et contra* dissertation supposedly on the whys, wherefores and hows of amorous seduction, was written in scholarly Latin, either at the end of the twelfth century, in a courtly context, or at the beginning of the thirteenth century in a Parisian scholarly one[2]. Written for a scholar named Walter, the initial two books of this apparently Ovidian enterprise initiate the reader to love, its dialogues and practices, while the third one is a virulent and misogynistic attack on it. Numerous theories exist about the identity and existence, or non-existence, of the author. Apparently a rather popular work according to the number of copies which have survived of the text and excerpts, it was famously outlawed by Estienne Tempier in 1277 along with 219 philosophical treatises[3]. This last fact has perhaps caused much of the polemic surrounding the text. Why did Estienne Tempier find this text intellectually and/or morally dangerous enough to ban ?

Kathleen Andersen-Wyman's recent book on the *Tractatus de amore* takes these questions around the text's censorship as its starting point, arguing that the text has nothing to do with love[4]. An interest in it from a courtly perspective would then seem to be misguided. Certainly we may no longer read the work for what it can tell us about actual medieval amorous practices or as a manual for « courtly love ». Yet one might still wonder why love was chosen as subject matter for such a treatise in the first place. What is the relationship between the courtly and the clerical in this seemingly inexplicable (or endlessly and differently explicable) text ? More importantly for the matter at hand, why does the treatise contain two, arguably courtly, narratives ? The *De amore*, which in many ways models itself on Ovid's *Art of Love*, unlike this text contains two potentially exemplary tales. Amid the many early, general claims about the work, it seems few have wondered what the two stories' functions were within the treatise. For C. Buridant, they are fragments which demonstrate the author's poetic abilities[5]. Though in a recent publication they are

[1] This article was largely inspired by a class I participated in at the University of Geneva given by Professor Jean-Yves Tilliette, whom I would like to thank for his patient and insightful pedagogy on such an elusive subject.

[2] See especially, for the latter argument, the article by P. Dronke, « 'Andreas Capellanus' », *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 4, 1994, p. 51-63. See A. Karnein for the former : « Auf des Suche nach einem Autor : Andreas Verfasser von *De amore* », *Germanisch-Romanische Monatschrift*, 59, 1978, p. 1-20.

[3] For a discussion of the treatise in the context of this interdiction, see M. Gally, « Quand l'art d'amour était mis à l'index », *Romania*, 113, 1992-1995, p. 421-440.

[4] K. Andersen-Wyman, *Andreas Capellanus on Love ? Desire, Seduction, and Subversion in a Twelfth Century Latin Text*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. This book also includes a useful overview of the bibliography on Andreas Capellanus and his infamous treatise, too extensive to be to be summarized it here.

[5] C. Buridant, *Traité de l'amour courtois*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1974, p. 21.

described as *exempla* [6], they appear not to have often been read as such, however, and the question remains as to what they are trying to teach[7].

The first tale, in Book I, inserted in the fifth dialogue between a wooing nobleman and the noblewoman he has chosen, is similar to the medieval narrative known as the *Lai du trot*, a Breton lai, which exists in one thirteenth century manuscript, and is also known as the *Purgatory of Cruel Beauties*[8]. The second, chapter VIII of Book II, which is entitled *De regulis amoris*, narrates the adventures of a Breton knight traveling to the King Arthur's palace in order to capture a falcon who guards a written document containing thirty-one rules of love[9]. He must do this to prove that the lady he loves is the most beautiful in the kingdom. The two tales have a reflexive quality, since the one Andreas inserted for his reader at the end of Book II mirrors and follows from the one placed into the argument of the suitor in Book I. Each story culminates in a different list of rules given by the King of Love, though these *regula*, a motley mixture of proverbial, physiological and popular knowledge, often contradict each other. The first set of rules refers to the second, since it culminates with a reference to the *De amore* itself, « the book addressed to Walter », which, it is claimed, will disseminate the rules to all lovers[10]. Perhaps the stories' most obvious lessons, the rules seem to be simply attached to the end of the narratives, in no way connected to them. Both tales come from Arthurian material, and the contrast between the *De amore* in general and their content is striking, though this isn't the only didactic Medieval Latin text to include such references[11].

Interestingly enough, Drouart la Vache, who translated the work into French in the thirteenth century, didn't seem to think the tales' messages were important enough to include them in his translation[12]. The *Lai du Trot* is a description of the punishments that await women who are either too hard or too easy in love, and the

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[6] D. A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism and the Courtly Tradition*, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2005, p. 96.

[7] On the treatise's motley character in relation to other works on love, see A. Corbellari, « Dire l'amour : Étude comparée des modes du discours dans le *De Amore* d'André le Chapelain, le *Collier de la colombe* et le *Kama Sutra* », *Courtly Arts and the Arts of Courtliness*, edited by K. Busby and C. Kleinhenz, Cambridge, Bower, 2006, p. 321-330.

[8] For echoes of this theme in Medieval English literature, see P. Battles, « In folly ripe, in reason rotten : The Flower and the Leaf and the *Purgatory of Cruel Beauties* », *Medium Aevum*, Fall, 2003, p. 238-258.

[9] The fact that the rules of love are in King Arthur's possession merits further attention : the figure of King Arthur begins to fade into the figure of the God of Love. It would thus seem that teachings on love are firmly rooted within a courtly and literary context to which narrative holds the key.

[10] Andreas Capellanus, *Andreas Capellanus On Love*, edited and translated by P. G. Walsh, Duckworth Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Editions, London, Duckworth, 1982, p. 117. I will refer to this edition henceforth as *On Love.*

[11] On the presence of a version of the tale *Laüstic* in the *De nugis curialium*, see J.-Y. Tilliette, « L'*exemplum* rhétorique : question de définition », *Les* Exempla *médiévaux : nouvelles perspectives*, dir. J. Berlioz and M.-A. Polo de Beaulieu, Champion, 1998, p. 43-65, especially p. 60-65.

[12] For different theories on Drouart's omissions, see B. Bowden, « The Art of Courtly Copulation », *Medievalia et Humanistica*, 9, 1979, p. 67-85, p. 70.

sweet pleasures afforded to women who accept to love those with merit[13]. Ovid begins his third book of advice for women on how to be loved with this argument, though it appears there without this narrative mantle[14]. Betsy Bowden in her well-known article on Andreas' erotic wordplay pays particular attention to the passage surrounding the tale, the fifth dialogue of the first book, for its suggestive language, which has often been glossed over and mistranslated by modern readers and editors[15]. This dialogue, between a nobleman and a noblewoman, also contains the only instance in all the dialogues of a lady who praises her suitor for his discursive ability. At the beginning of the dialogue she says : *Recte sapis, et multum mihi placet audire*[16]. The nobleman continues to court her, and after a passage which Bowden reads as a thinly veiled description of his wet dream[17], the noblewoman reiterates her appreciation of her suitor's well-constructed discourse. *Re vera in tua persona nobilitari novit prudentia, et habitaculum invenerunt suavitatis eloquia, quod tam provide tamque prudenter tu novisti proponere iura*[18]. Her insistence on his mental capacities ironically contrasts with the very physical descriptions the nobleman gives of his *poenis* the pains of love, which Bowden reads as a pun meaning the male member. What is the lady praising exactly and why does his discourse give her pleasure ? Perhaps it is simply his vivid word play. Yet if the fifth dialogue is an example of a well constructed argumentative discourse, which does finally persuade the lady to give in to love, though perhaps not with her suitor, why does Drouart leave out the *Lai du trot* ? Simply because of the untranslatable puns[19] ? Or better yet, why is it included in the first place ?

The nobleman first tries to persuade the lady by describing Love's palace whose three doors represent different attitudes women may have towards their suitors : the women at the northern one always remain inside with the door closed, the women at the western one remain outside and the door is always open, while the women of the southern one, standing always at the threshold in the full light of the sun, make judicious choices about whom to allow in. The man's first architectural comparison fails to seduce the lady, who, after first demanding that the knight

[13] For an edition and discussion of this poem, see G. Burgess and L. Brook, eds., *Three Old French Narrative Lays : Trot, Lecheor, Nabaret*, (*Liverpool Online Series, Critical Editions of French Texts*), University of Liverpool, 1999.

[14] Ovide, *L'art d'aimer*, éd. H. Bornecque, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1983, Book III, lines 69-98.

[15] B. Bowden, « The Art of Courtly Copulation », art. cit.

[16] « You are a man of right sense and I am delighted to listen to you. » (*On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 97).

[17] B. Bowden, art. cit., p. 72.

[18] « Truly good sense finds itself ennobled in your person, and charming eloquence has found a dwelling there, since you can propound your rights with such forethought and wisdom » (*On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 99).

[19] B. Bowden mentions E. Trojel's argument (as the first editor of the *De amore*) that Drouart excluded « whatever did not fit into French poetic meter » and R. Bossuat's (in his edition of the *Li livres d'amours*) that the story no longer fit to what readers knew of courtly debate. She argues that Drouart needed to distinguish his work from the banned *De amore* as much as possible (art. cit. p. 70). I would argue that Drouart's enterprise, more of an adaptation than a translation of the text into a poetic treatise, differs greatly from the original *De amore*, especially from the perspective of the its didactic nature. The *exempla*, essentially tools of argument, are no longer needed when the text is no longer trying to teach how to argue.

clarify his message, *Hi mihi sunt nimis sermones obscuri*[20], says : « I declare myself safe inside the north entrance, but not accursed[21] ! » He then goes on to tell the *Lai du trot* as if it were a dream he has had which will inform the lady of the punishments (*poenas*) which await her. This story is the crowning jewel of the nobleman's argument and it works. His description of the horrible fate of those women who refuse their suitors, forced to ride bareback on lame horses clad in wolf skins in the heat of summer, convinces the noblewoman that indeed, perhaps she may want to love in a moderate fashion, a man who is worthy of her, even if she doesn't give in to this particular suitor. She says : « Whether your account (*proponis*), is true or false, your narrative (*relatio*) of fearful punishment terrifies me »[22]. She will seek to find a worthy lover.

The fact that the story effectively persuades an audience suggests that it has here the status of an *exemplum*. Most often, an *exemplum* is simply defined as a story that can serve as an example, an illustrative story, though following the history of its definition is a bit like reading the bibliography on the *De amore* ; everything has been said about *exempla* but conclusions remain difficult to make, especially in regards to those in non-religious writings. Where does the idea of using *exempla* in argument come from ? Narrative as argument is apparently at the very origins of persuasive discourse. Aristotle writes that « argument by example has the nature of induction » and is the « foundation of all reasoning »[23]. He divides the use of examples into those drawn from history and those invented but drawn from real life, dividing this last category into comparisons and fables. He doesn't place a value judgment on one or the other, however, and states simply that if the example is invented, it should come at the end of the argument while factual examples may come first. If one wants to begin with invented examples, one should use many of them, while only one suffices if it comes at the end. We may think of the courtly persuader in the *De amore* when he says that fables « are suitable for addresses to popular assemblies ». He then states that they are not hard to invent while factual parallels are more difficult to establish for « all you require is the power of thinking out your analogy, a power developed by intellectual training »[24]. Andreas' suitor seems to have sufficiently trained his mind to be able to use an example just in this way.

Writers in the Middle Ages do seem to have placed more importance on the factuality of examples, however. In Cicero, the use of *exempla* is directly related to argument and in particular to its probability. One of the three subdivisions of comparison, along with similitude (*comparabile*) and parallel (*collatio*), an example

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[20] « This description of yours is much too opaque for me, and your words too cryptic, unless you explain them and make them clear. » (*On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 103).
[21] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
[22] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 119. C. Brown, in her book *Contrary Things : Exegesis, Dialectic and the Poetics of Didacticism*, cites this passage, stating the following : « Less a dialectician than a reader of fiction, the lady thus neatly sidesteps the true/false, *either/or* structure in which her suitor sought to trap her by taking the story she has heard as just that : a story. » The goal is to create « the appearance of probability » (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 110-111).
[23] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, translated by W. Rhys Roberts, Book II, 20, 1393a (*The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*, New York, The Modern Library, 1954, 1984, p. 133).
[24] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, *op. cit.*, 1394a.

« supports or weakens a case by appeal to precedent or experience, citing some person or historical event » [25]. In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium, exempla* are again closely related to comparisons, or to what Aristotle calls « illustrative parallels » but the Pseudo-Cicero defines exemplification as « the citing of something done or said in the past, along with the definite naming of the doer or author »[26]. John of Garland reiterates this in the Middle Ages : *Exemplum est dictum vel factum alicuius autentice persone dignum imitatione*[27]. The *exempla* should be used as a rhetorical device to persuade and does so all the more easily because its telling gives the audience pleasure[28]. The *De amore*'s stories fall most readily under Aristotle's definition, which might be further proof of the treatise's scholastic origins[29], yet the nobleman in the fifth dialogue of the *De amore* does make a careful effort to tell the story as dream he has had, which he claims to be factual. At the same time, the narrative is too obviously invented to incite imitation, and the Breton's deeds are so exaggerated that they are clearly not of the world of historical fact. Can these stories be considered *exempla* ? Remember that the noblewoman of the fifth dialogue is the only one of the women to state her pleasure at hearing her suitor's discourse, and though she doesn't agree to be his lover, she does believe his argument about the necessity to give herself in some way to love. Her enjoyment of the story, or her tangible fear of a horrific purgatory, seems to have convinced her of her suitor's argument. The story appears to have been told according to the rules of *exempla* use in the Middle Ages[30].

The Pseudo-Cicero goes on to say that, like the comparison, the *exemplum* « renders a thought more brilliant when used for no other purpose than beauty ; clearer, when throwing more light upon what was somewhat obscure ; more plausible when giving the thought greater verisimilitude ; more vivid when expressing everything so lucidly that the matter can, I may almost say, be touched

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[25] *Exemplum est quod rem auctoritate aut casu alicuius hominis aut negoti confirmat aut infirmat* (Cicero, *De Inventione, De optimo genere oratorum, topica*, trans. H. M. Hubbel, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press, 1949, 2000, I.xxx.49, p. 89).

[26] *Exemplum est alicuius facti aut dicti praeteriti cum certi auctoris nomine proposition* ([Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, trans. H. Caplan, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, Harvard University Press, 1954, 1999, IV.xlix.62, p. 383).

[27] « An *exemplum* is the speech or act of some real person worthy of imitation » (cited in *Typologie des sources du Moyen âge occidental*, C. Bremond, J. Le Goff et J.-C. Schmitt, *L'*exemplum, Turnhout, Brepols [Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental 40], 1982, p. 29).

[28] J.-T. Welter quotes St. Ambrose as the first post-classical writer to defend the use of *exempla* in sermons because they persuade more easily. See J.-T. Welter, *L'*exemplum *dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge*, Genève, Slatkine reprints, 1973 (Paris-Toulouse, 1927), p. 13.

[29] See Don Monson's very complete study for more on these origins.

[30] Kathleen Andersen-Wyman quotes the following passage from Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* which summarizes well, I think, the medieval vision of *exempla* as an argumentative tool. Abelard is speaking simply of the example of his life, not a story in this passage, though the two seem to meet : *Sepe humanos affectus aut provocant aut mittigant amplius exempla quam verba.* « There are times when example is better than precept for stirring or soothing human passions » (*op. cit.*, p. 119).

by the hand »[31]. The author's own use of a comparison at the end of this passage draws our attention to the power of the *exemplum* within an argument, and within the construction of the *De amore* as an argumentative text then, the stories, despite their clearly fictional nature, do seem to have their place, especially when it comes to this very image - how language may allow something to be « touched by the hand ». Let us turn now to the Breton Knight's episode, in which the *accipiter*, the falcon or bird that seizes, and the glove, which covers the hand, are the images of choice which render vivid for the reader an essential aspect of any art of love. The word *accipio* is intriguing as its meaning encompasses both passive accepting and active taking ; especially as in taking up with one's hand. It also means to take up or comprehend something intellectually. I will be paying special attention to this word in the reading that follows, especially in terms of the hand imagery at play which echoes the Pseudo-Cicero's definition of the *exemplum*.

The Breton knight's adventure is situated at the end of Book II, immediately before the third and final book which denigrates women and banishes love as the sin which engenders all others. Its apparent purpose is to introduce another series of *regula*, or rules of love, which in the story are written on a piece of parchment and attached by a chain to the falcon's golden perch. This list of thirty-one rules contradicts itself, and in some ways perhaps the contradictions they introduce hint at the greater reversal of argument which is to follow. Yet strangely enough the story's importance is played down in the work. The author states that he will briefly introduce the rules of love which the King of Love had written for the world's lovers. « I shall try to reveal these to you very briefly ; they are said to have been pronounced by the king of love himself from his own lips, and to have been committed in writing by him to all lovers »[32]. What follows is a rather lengthy account of the voyage of the knight who found the rules of love at King Arthur's court. Written in a scholastic Latin that may have been difficult to read for anyone not extremely well versed in the clerical arts, the text also seems to mock the literary sources it imitates, reducing and condensing the literary tropes of Arthurian romance to their essence in such a way that they lose all their mystery. The Breton's adventure, unlike Lancelot's, is very matter-of-fact without the interior monologues or digressions on the part of the narrator which make Arthurian romances so rich. Parallels with various romances abound however, though I won't take the time to discuss them here[33].

If the story does not entertain as well as it might, an interesting parallel exists between its position in the text and the equivalent section in Ovid's *Art of Love.* The last part of Ovid's Book II is a description of the physical act of love – how to make it lastingly pleasurable for both men and women. The obvious apex of any art of love, this description of lovemaking is essential to Ovid's treatise. The Arthurian adventure falls in the same position of the *De amore* as this passage in Ovid. Might the narrative be an extended metaphor of lovemaking ? One sign that we may be treading in the register of lovemaking is that the knight in the story comes across

[31] [Cicero], *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, translated by H. Caplan, Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, Harvard University Press, 1954, 1999, IV.xlix.62, p. 383.
[32] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 271.
[33] The main parallels, to Chrétien de Troye's *Erec et Enide* and *Chevalier de la Charrette* are described in Claude Buridant's French translation, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

tables richly laden with forbidden food. He cannot help himself but eat, as the fifth dialogue's lady reminds her suitor : « Once he has truly entered Love's court, a lover can say yea or nay to nothing except the fare placed before him on Love's table, and that which can please his partner in love[34] ».

Furthermore, as an interesting article by Beate Schmolke-Hasselman has shown, the imagery of the tale comes from common erotic metaphors elsewhere prevalent in medieval court culture[35]. The falcon, *accipiter*, in both iconography and texts, often represents a man, and in particular a man's sexual attributes[36]. Men are also compared to birds of prey in the second dialogue of the *De amore*, in which a noblewoman refuses the advances of a common man because she herself is too valuable a « booty » for a bird of his class[37]. Though Schmolke-Hasselman states that the symbol of the glove as an erotic symbol for a woman is less common, she also establishes the use of this metaphor in literary and artistic works where it can symbolize the lady, her genitals and sexual initiation[38]. For obvious reasons, once revealed, this reading of the glove as the female equivalent of the falcon seems almost too obvious. In the story, the glove is required to hold and acquire the bird. Both words appear in the passage just before the story in which the Countess of Champagne answers to the question of what lovers can offer each other as gifts. Lovers may accept (*accipere)* from there partners, among other things, *chirothecas* and *manicas*, gloves and gauntlets[39]. Gift giving and exchange often stand in the place of sexual intercourse in romance narrative and lyric[40]. Here we have men and women offering each other what might be read as a sexual symbol. Gloves and gauntlets are, interestingly enough, at the center of the long list of exchangeable objects. Like the exchange that happens in lovemaking, the lovers appear to be offering to each other their shared sexuality.

As another woman states at the end of Book I, love « constrains a man to be ready at the appropriate time to bestow his possessions on all, to show fierceness against those who war on him, delight at the varying strains of battle, and

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[34] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

[35] B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, « *Accipiter et chirotecha*. Die Artusepisode des Andreas Capellanus. Eine Liebesallegorie ? », *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, 63, 1982, p. 387-417, p. 392.

[36] An interesting passage recently came to my attention, in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*, in which Yseut's eyes are compared to those of a falcon. These are lines 10957-62 and 10996-11006, quoted in J. Chocheyras, *Réalité et imaginaire dans le* Tristan *de Béroul* (Paris, Champion, 2011, p. 132). Clearly of a sexual nature, the symbol may be less gender specific than Schmolke-Hasselman suggests, standing for both male and female sexuality, or Gottfried may be playing on and reversing an already existing metaphor.

[37] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 63. In regards to the hawking metaphor, Andersen-Wyman sees it as a sign of the « heterosexual contract » of Andreas' period : « When using the hawking metaphor, women and men both acknowledge that women are victims and men predators » (*op. cit.*, p. 52). My comments in the preceding note might contest this generalization.

[38] B. Schmolke-Hasselmann, « Accipiter et chirotecha », art. cit., p. 396-399.

[39] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 268-269.

[40] See, for example, Robin and Marion's exchanges of gifts and food in Adam de la Halle's *Robin et Marion* (Adam de la Halle, *Le Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, éd. J. Dufournet, Paris, Flammarion, 1989).

application to the grinding toils of war »[41]. A man's physical prowess in battle is related to his endurance in the sexual act, and at least since Ovid, love is a battlefield. The Breton in this sense clearly asserts his masculinity over that of his opponents, even cutting off the hand of the giant that he fights – symbolically emasculating him. He is then able to enter a round castle in the deepest recesses of which stands a golden column that bears the glove. When he seizes it « boldly » and places it on his left hand, voices of protest arise up out of the castle all around him. The voices of protest which greet the knight's taking of the glove suggest rape or the violence often associated with the physical act of love, yet no one is present, which suggests he is claiming that which is his own, his own sexual capacity. The voices say : *Heu heu, nobis invitis hostis victor cum praeda recedit*.[42] His physical force is the key to his victory. The Breton knight then travels further on through beautiful fields and comes across another castle, which is King Arthur's. He shows the guards « the falcon's glove » he has obtained. A knight asks him : *Ob quam causam accipitrem accipere quaeris* ?[43] Note here the play on the two similar words, the verb to seize and the noun designating the falcon. The knight states his belief that he loves the most beautiful lady, and he must once again fight in order to defend his claim. With a final victory, he beats his adversary whose vision is confused with a « bold, swift leap », he proves that he is able to claim the falcon[44]. Attached to the falcon's perch by a gold chain are the 31 rules of love which the story's title announced. He brings these rules back to his own land in order to share them with all lovers, meeting the helpful maiden from the beginning of the story along the way[45].

Through its various stages, the entire story may be read through the lens of the language of sex, as a story of the discovery of sexuality, a kind of figurative how to guide, for the male reader with some knowledge of the code[46]. I say male reader for a reason. The sexual imagery in the *Lai du Trot*, which describes different areas of the landscape where each type of lady resides in terms of « wetness » and « dryness », gives a parallel description in poetic terms of female sexual function, as though the suitor wanted to teach the noble lady not only that she should say yes to him, but also to give her some awareness of her own sexual physiology[47]. The dialogue demonstrates how to successfully argue about sex with a woman. If the *Lai du Trot* is an *exemplum* for a woman, could the Breton tale be an *exemplum* for the

[41] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
[42] « Alas ! The enemy is victorious and is leaving with the spoil against our will. » (*On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 279.)
[43] « Why do you seek to carry off the hawk » (*On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 281).
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] Schmolke-Hasselmann reads the role of this helpful woman or fairy figure as the one who initiates the knight into lovemaking and makes him a man. « Im Traumreich der Fee ist der junge Ritter zum Mann geworden » (art. cit., p. 398).
[46] Beate Schmolke-Hasselmann sees the story as the precursor to such use of allegory one finds in the *Roman de la Rose* (art. cit. p. 399). Schmolke-Hasselmann's argument involves a sociological analysis of the treatise's role in the Parisian court of the late twelfth century. I find Dronke's attribution of the work to the thirteenth century most convincing, however (art. cit.). One might thus see the work as engaging in the same kind of effort as the *Roman de la Rose*, especially in the way it seeks talk about, and to teach, physical love through allegory.
[47] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

projected reader, a man ? The Breton tale also contains precepts of knightly behavior, teaching, in addition to how to figuratively make love, how to act in a courtly manner : don't strike a man who is pleading a second time, speak courteously, show respect for ladies, be humble yet brave and physically strong. Interestingly enough, it is this male position which leads to the condemnation of love, after all the judgments offered by the ladies in Book II. We can't be sure who was reading this text, but we can imagine the ideal reader, Gautier, as a young man learning about love and language[48].

Critics are divided as to whether to read the *De amore* for the sexual imagery I have summarized. Sometimes called the « dirty joke », or « obscene » readings, I would like to suggest instead that there is nothing obscene about these medieval discussions of male and female sexuality. I believe writers in the Middle Ages, and Andreas in particular, whether he was a real author or an authorial invention, were less squeamish then we might imagine and had a different sensibility than ours as to what was considered vulgar. Perhaps the later Church found it reprehensible, as Tempier certainly did when he outlawed the text for its *vanitates et insania falsas*, *quosdam manifestos et execrabiles errores*[49], but I think the courtly and clerical cultures from which the author of the *De amore* was writing knew what they were reading about in writings about love, and it wasn't only the exchange of dialogue and poems. The whole constructed ideal of « courtly love » sometimes appears to be a contemporary way of removing sexuality from love. Indeed, it seems as though many readings of the *De amore* try to get sex out of the way, as though making love wasn't courtly, at least not when it gets down to actions and leaves words behind, though we may assume, as today, that the sexual act associated with love was a popular topic of contemplation and discussion. This is made abundantly clear by the second half of the *De amore*'s first sentence after the prologue, the much discussed definition of love : *Amor est passio quaedam innata procedens ex visione et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus, ob quam aliquis super omnia cupit alterius potiri amplexibus et omnia de utriusque voluntate in ipsius amplexu amoris praecepta compleri.*[50] Yet some completely dismiss the relevance of physical love to the *De amore*'s discourse, seeing it as only a foil for more weighty philosophical considerations. See, for example, Peter Allen's summary of the work :

> Ultimately the discussion of love does not pursue erotic, physical ends ; instead it creates an intellectual framework for the exploration of human nature and our existential conditions… Both Andreas and Ruiz [in the *Libro de buen amor*] have

[48] For a summary of the arguments as to the *De amore*'s readership, see Andersen-Wyman, *op. cit.*, p. 7-11.
[49] *On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
[50] In the English, this one sentence becomes two, thus perhaps encouraging the modern reader to take the act of love as secondary to love. « Love is an inborn suffering which results from the sight of, and the uncontrolled thinking about, the beauty of the other sex. This feeling makes a man desire before all else the embraces of the other sex, and to achieve the utter fulfilment of the commands of love in the other's embrace by their common desire » (*On Love*, *op. cit.*, p. 32-33). For a thorough discussion of this definition which does include the importance of sexual union as the « final cause » of love, see D. A. Monson, « Andreas Capellanus's Scholastic Definition of Love », *Viator*, 25, 1994, p. 197-214.

> presented us with literary challenges of the highest order, but the challenges are sweetened, on the surface, with a discourse on love providing the textual springboard for the true philosophical, that is, epistemological, investigations of human existence.[51]

I agree that Andreas' work is ultimately of a philosophical nature, but I think we must read the discussions of physical love as a very part and parcel of this enterprise, not simply as its sweet covering. I think medieval writers didn't see a discussion of sex as anodyne, but rather attributed to it significant didactic value, for reasons that still remain largely unexplained.

I also agree with critics like Kathleen Andersen-Wyman who claim the text is profoundly subversive, though she questions whether the *De amore* is about love or sex at all, claiming, however, that it is about desire[52]. I think the problem is our limited idea of what was really discussed when one talked about love in the Middle Ages. Could love making itself be the subversive subject matter of the text ? What is so subversive about love making ? We know, from the Church's attempt to control it, that it was seen as morally dangerous. But perhaps it was also seen as intellectually dangerous since the women and men in the *De amore* who speak to each other are equally elegant and adept at language, as they might have been when they made love. They seem dangerously free with their acts, their ideas and their words. Perhaps this is because love making is a moment of human existence outside of language, and outside of laws; it can't be constricted and it must be talked around ; language in some sense can't touch it[53] . It remains ultimately beyond language, and when men and women do it, and talk about it, attempting to put words on what is difficult to name, its subversive nature comes to the fore. The incoherent rules that follow the two tales in the text suggest that the narratives are playing a willful game around an evasive subject matter. As the vessels in which these motley *regula* are transmitted, the *exempla* allow for the indescribable to be seized by the mind of the reader ; the meaning of the text is grasped because of the vivid narrative language. As one German critic put it : « Die Geschichte ist eine Lehrmeisterin »[54]. We might also say, for the courtly *exemplum*, a master of love.

So what makes these *exempla* courtly ? In one sense, the stories in the *De amore* show how courtliness and exemplarity go hand in hand. Yet they also question the very use of *exempla* in a traditional sense, showing that the pleasure of

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[51] P. Allen, *The Art of Love : Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, p. 361, quoted in K. Andersen-Wyman, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[52] *Op. cit.*, p. 25. K. Andersen-Wyman also writes of the « uses of fiction to socialize desire », a function which may be attributed to the two tales examined here (*op. cit.*, p. 31).

[53] M. Gally writes of how the discourse of love can only be represented in the realm of the imaginary, outside the realm of *ratio* and of laws (*op. cit.*, p. 428, quoted in A. Corbellari, *op. cit.*, 328). A. Corbellari goes on to say that the treatise's failed attempt to render love, « sentiment irrationnel », in rational terms, « discours rationnel », proves that love is fundamentally unspeakable (*op. cit.*, p. 329). Here I'm privileging how narrative may allow for love to be spoken or expressed, and, more fundamentally, what this expression teaches.

[54] M. Schanz, quoted in J.-T. Welter, *L'*exemplum *dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge*, Genève, Slatkine reprints, 1973 (Paris-Toulouse, 1927), p. 11.

narrativity can make palatable even the most controversial truths. What are we really learning when we are learning about love through narrative ? The Arthurian tales in this context question the very use of vernacular narrative as didactic, pushing the limits of what a story can teach. Yet perhaps courtly literature was only ever a foil for a critical awareness of the very courtliness it was supposedly constructing. Isn't there something inherently subversive in story telling, inherently instructive in narrative ? Mightn't all reading be dangerous in that it calls readers into dialogue, causes them to question their assumptions and observe the creative potential of dynamic language ? Describing how to seize more than just the body with the hand, the sexual imagery of the stories in the *De amore* may instruct more than how to make love ; the falcon may also teach how to seize with the mind, how to understand[55].

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[55] C. Brown places the *De amore* in a medieval didactic tradition of exegesis and dialectic which uses contraries to teach. In her reading, its *duplex sententia* teaches « nothing more and nothing less than how to make sense of textual teaching » (*op. cit.*, p. 112).